

## Lineages: Korean Art at The Met

### 계보: 메트로폴리탄 미술관의 한국 미술

November 6, 2023 – October 20, 2024

The Metropolitan Museum of Art

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In the fall of 2023, five major museums in the United States, including the Metropolitan Museum of Art, the Guggenheim Museum, the Philadelphia Museum of Art, the San Diego Museum of Art, and the Denver Art Museum, held Korean art exhibitions. This serendipitous confluence broadened and diversified the audience's experience of Korean art by shedding light on its different traditions and movements. Continuing through October 20, 2024, "Lineages: Korean Art at The Met" celebrates the twenty-fifth anniversary of the establishment of the Arts of Korea gallery at the museum. The exhibition not only highlights the Met's collecting history of Korean art but also introduces modern and contemporary art with important international loans. Four themes – Lines, People, Places, Things – are interconnected to showcase multiple legacies of Korean art, mostly paintings and ceramics.

Walking into the gallery, the viewer encounters five paintings that show various artistic approaches to lines. The first two paintings depict the same subject, bamboo, whose linear stalks and leaves are composed of a variety of brushworks: "Bamboo in the Wind" by Yi Jeong (1541–1626) and "Blood Bamboo" attributed to Yang Gi-hun (1843-?). Three paintings by contemporary artists, Yun Hyong-keun (1928-2007), Lee Ufan (1936-), and Kwon Young-woo (1926–2013), follow to present their different experiments with lines. For instance, Kwon's work, "Untitled," challenges the medium boundary between painting and sculpture, creating numerous vertical lines of blue color wash and one deep horizontal crevice in the middle.

The People section focuses on figural depictions of women and farmers that had been

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underrepresented in Korean painting tradition. Lee Yootae's (1916–1999) portrayal of a female researcher demonstrates women's changing social status in modern times. "Earth at Oziri" by Lee Jong-gu (1954–) captures with hyperrealism the fatigue and skepticism of Korean farmers in the 1980s by depicting three of them squatting down against the backdrop of torn posters of politicians. The Places section displays two idealized landscape paintings in different styles. A Joseon gyeohoedo, "Gathering of Government Officials," depicts a joyful gathering of officials taking place by streams and mountains painted in the style of Guo Xi. Juxtaposed to it is "Paradise" by Paik Nam-soon (1904-1994), in which the painter created a utopian land for a newly married couple by adopting both Korean and European painting motifs and techniques.

Lastly, the section of Things is designed to engage the audience in dynamic artistic conversations between Korean ceramics and modern and contemporary artists. A Goryeo celadon tile is displayed with Byron Kim's (1961–) two "Goryeo Green Glaze" paintings, which emphasize the indescribable color of its glaze. An eighteenth-century moon jar is in dialogue with Kim Whanki's (1913–1974) painting, "Moon and Jar," and Lee Seung-taek's (1932–) ceramic piece, "Tied White Porcelain." On celadon-color podiums of different heights, Korean ceramics – stoneware, celadon, buncheong, and porcelain – are shown with Lee Bul's (1964–) porcelain works that are related to her Cyborg series, inviting viewers to explore a wide spectrum of this rich tradition.

Introducing the divergent artistic styles and forms, the exhibition highlights multiple histories and plural lineages of Korean art rather than establishing a grand narrative or homogeneous tradition. The interesting juxtapositions and multilayered dialogues between the objects across different times and mediums make this point compelling. Going beyond celebrating the history of Korean art at the Met, the show suggests to the audience its future direction – the expansion of the modern and contemporary Korean art collection.